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‘The Girl About Town’: discussions of modernity and female youth in Drum magazine 1951- 1970.

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Abstract

This article examines the trope of the ‘modern miss’ in Drum magazine 1951- 1970 as a locus for debate over South African urban modernity. At the centre of Drum’s African urbanity was a debate between a progressive, positively ‘modern’ existence and an attendant fear of moral and social ‘breakdown’ in the Apartheid City. The trope of the ‘modern miss’ drew upon both discourses. Drum’s fascination with the ‘modern miss’ reached a peak in the years 1957-1963 during which time she appeared prominently in the magazine as a symbolic pioneer of changing gender and generational relationships. However, this portrayal continued to coexist alongside the image of young women as the victims of moral degeneration. The ‘modern miss’ was increasingly differentiated from adult women within Drum’s pages, which distanced her from the new space won by political activists. By examining constructions of young womanhood points to the gendering of ‘youth’ at the intersection of commercial print culture and shifting social relations in mid-twentieth century South Africa. It is also suggested that understanding the social configurations of Drum’s modernity illuminates the gendered and generational responses of formal political movements as they conducted their own concurrent debates.

Introduction

This article examines the construction of a particular youthful femininity within Drum magazine’s wider discussions of modernity in South Africa between 1951 and 1970. Existing scholarship on Drum has shown the ways in which the magazine’s urban modernity was structured by race, class and gender. The focus will be upon generation and the ways in which discussions of youth and adulthood intersect with race, class and gender in the trope of the ‘modern miss’. The particular and changing positions young African women occupied in Drum’s African urbanity open a view onto the changing nature of gender and generational relations in South Africa through the period 1951 to 1970. It has been argued previously that Drum’s treatment of women signified a cultural backlash against the social and political empowerment of women in the Apartheid city (Driver, 1996). This article attempts to build upon that suggestion by

highlighting the importance of generation to Drum's discussions of women's places in African urban modernity.

For our purposes modernity will be understood as an unresolved debate. As Jean and John Comaroff have noted, modernity 'has come to circulate, almost worldwide, as a metaphor of new means and ends, of new materialities and meanings. As a (more-or-less) pliable sign, it attracts different referents, and different values, wherever it happens to land' (Comaroff, 1993: xiii). Modernity as discussed in Drum constituted a contested and changing set of social practises, drawn from numerous sources and constantly being shaped and reshaped by the material realities of the Apartheid city. Drum's modernity was also, in a broad sense a political project. Through asserting an African urban and modern existence Apartheid ideology denied, Drum participated in debates over race, class, gender, generation and their meanings and boundaries in mid-twentieth century South Africa. At the centre of Drum's African urbanity was an ongoing tension, between a progressive, positive, 'modern' urban existence and an attendant fear of moral and social breakdown in the Apartheid city. All that was corrupt and lamentable in township life could be traced with no sense of contradiction to both 'outdated' traditions and Apartheid and simultaneously to a new upset of 'appropriate' gender and generational relations. In these discussions young women and their bodies became highly visible through the trope of the 'modern miss'. The economic empowerment and sexual availability of the 'modern miss' in the city were common features, whether deplored or made a site for female independence. The focus here upon the trope of the 'modern miss' is a way of reading these wider debates over modernity and highlighting the political implications that such discussion had for cultural resistance to Apartheid and formal liberation politics. The article thus speaks to several different historiographies: youth studies in Africa; histories of Drum magazine; and considerations of the content of anti-colonial nationalisms.

Drum and Young Women

Drum magazine is examined in this article as a textual and social space for the discussion of an African urban modernity that was heavily contested and politically charged in mid-twentieth century South Africa. Drum's history and political economy has been well documented but some brief background details will be sketched here to underpin the analysis. Drum was first published in Cape Town in 1951 under the title *The African Drum*. Unpopular at first, in 1952 it changed its name and its character, moving to Johannesburg and embracing the style and subject of an 'African urbanity'. In the next two decades Drum became 'Africa's leading magazine' with a circulation of 470, 000 in South Africa by 1969. Drum became famous for its style, seen as the expression of township culture especially Sophiatown's 'Renaissance' (Coplan, 1985: 144-182). However, a properly nuanced view of Drum's

relationship with the African urbanity it ‘emerged from’ and then ‘sold back’ to its readers is vital to understanding the magazine historically.

‘White ownership- black readers’ was a common formula in South Africa’s printed media in the period 1931- 1977 (Johnson, 1991: 23). The identification of a potential ‘black market’ by white entrepreneurs in the 1930s had an ambiguous dynamic, with the most successful publications like *Drum* striving to remove any evidence of ‘the white hand’. *Drum* was owned by Jim Bailey, who had inherited a fortune from his father, the ‘Randlord’ Sir Abe Bailey. It is acknowledged that Bailey was able to develop with *Drum* under the editorship of Anthony Sampson and his white successors a ‘commercial image with journalism of heightened awareness’ (Chapman, 2001: 186). Nevertheless political histories of South Africa tend to rate *Drum* rather poorly in terms of its direct criticisms of Apartheid. However, more recent historiography has rediscovered *Drum* as part of a cultural resistance to Apartheid, at a time when formal political activity was heavily curtailed (Fenwick, 1996: 622). Central to this argument is *Drum*’s self-conscious urbanity. *Drum*’s celebration of African urban life challenged Apartheid ideologies of separate development. Such notions were supposed to see Africans confined to the rural ‘homelands’ and ensure the preservation of ‘traditional’ cultures. Africans were not supposed to find permanent homes in the city. In this light historians have re-examined the content in *Drum* previously dismissed as not of literary merit or political importance; what one commentator has called ‘the most ephemeral trash imaginable’ (Gready, 1990: 144). Crucial to such an approach is the reading of context alongside the magazine.

Drum was no simple ‘mirror’ of township life but nor should its possible impact be overstated. The approach of this article is to treat *Drum* as a social and textual space. It was a space because it was limited: by the nature of the media in Apartheid South Africa, by those that could access it and how it could be accessed. Socially it did not have one unified voice- with numerous journalists and readers’ letters- it presented debate and contradicted itself within the same edition. As a textual space it had a complicated relationship with reality- it both reflected and recreated African urban existence in its pages- giving a particular view of the townships and African modernity. At no point does this article claim to be uncovering the ‘real lives’ of young African women in South Africa’s urban townships. Rather its aim is to examine when, where and how young women appear in the particular trope of the ‘modern miss’ in *Drum*’s discussions of modernity.

However, in order to read *Drum* and within that the trope of the ‘modern miss’ the broad social processes of urbanisation as it took place in twentieth century Apartheid South Africa should be highlighted. The 1930s and 1940s had seen the increasing poverty of the rural reserves and a growth in the manufacturing industries that drew larger numbers of rural Africans, and especially women, to the urban areas (Marks and Trapido, 1988: 5). These women were largely drawn into domestic service in

white households, positions previously filled by African men now deemed to be more appropriately employed in the new manufacturing (Berger, 1992: 162). Despite increased migration of women the urbanisation that occurred within the strictures of influx controls, tightened after 1952, could lead to huge gender imbalances in the townships. Drum itself estimated in 1954 that there was a ratio of four men to every woman in Johannesburg, with the situation in other towns along the Gold Reef as extreme as seven men to one woman in Springs (Drum, February 1954: 14). With many families forced to live apart by migrant labour, marriage proved increasingly unable to provide security for men or women. Other urban centres such as Port Elizabeth and East London did have relatively balanced sex ratios (Berger, 1992: 193). However, urban life for families that did remain together was also insecure since fathers or husbands could be 'summarily jailed for pass offences, or sent back to the Reserves' (Ballantine, 2000: 387). The city could easily be perceived by some migrants as a 'corrosion of appropriate relationships of gender and generation' (*ibid*: 387).

For those women who did find homes in the cities, urban life offered different possibilities as well as hardships. The 1950s saw the emergence of female headed households, perhaps as many as two fifths of all urban households one survey suggests (*ibid*: 387). Cherryl Walker notes that these households were often matriline, multigenerational families- 'a woman, her daughter (legitimate or illegitimate) and their daughters' (Walker, 1991: 149). The informal economies, of which beer brewing was one of the most prominent, continued throughout the period to provide women with alternatives to wage labour. Into the 1960s further shifts in the structure of employment saw Coloured and some African women beginning to replace white women moving out of factories and into service industries (Berger, 1992: 252). These women were heavily concentrated in 'female' manufacturing sectors such as clothing, textiles, processed food and tobacco. They were also largely permanently urbanised women increasingly given preference over new migrants female or male (*ibid*: 250). It is in light of all this that historians have argued the reshaping of gender relations that came with urbanisation was a problematic one for South African masculinity- with expanding roles for African women in the urban environment perceived as compounding the disempowerment of African men under Apartheid (Driver, 1996: 232). However, what will be emphasised here are the ways in which changing and uncertain gender relations intersected with generational relationships.

It is read in this context that Drum has been seen as a cultural space in which male writers re-established control over women, or discursively 'disempowered' them. What is not clear in these existing analyses are the dynamics of generational relationships between and across genders. Dorothy Driver argues that male Drum writers aggressively feminised powerful women, in particular through their coverage of women's pass opposition and the Federation of South African Women's in the mid-1950s

(Driver, 1996: 236). Driver links Drum's feminisation of women with 'modernisation' and the construction of consumerism and domesticity amongst a black middle class (*ibid*: 232). Building on Driver's approach it is clear that in Drum age significantly affects the tropes used to discuss women. Lynn Thomas has argued for the emergence in South Africa of a 'modern girl' female figure in Bantu World, another earlier magazine aimed at a black audience, by the early 1930s (Thomas, 2006: 461-90). She demonstrates the way in which the figure of the 'modern girl' became a site in Bantu World for debates over race and respectability in Segregationist South Africa. The argument here is that the figure of the 'modern miss', differentiated from older adult women, in Drum between 1951- 1970 can be read as a site for the continuation of such debates over the urban African modernity wrought under Apartheid.

There was no linear succession of more and more 'modern' and 'positive' female characters appearing in Drum that equated with increasing numbers of urbanised young women in employment and the establishment of a strong women's anti-apartheid political sphere. Nor was there an increasingly virulent backlash against changing gender relations. There were two main discourses on young women and modernity that coexisted and overlapped during the 1950s and 1960s. What might be termed a 'positive' discourse on modernity that celebrated young women's social empowerment as a sign of progress and simultaneously equated economic and social emancipation with sexual availability. This overlapped with a discourse on the social breakdown of urban African society that lamented young women's increased sexual availability as a sign of moral degradation. These two wide ranging discourses fed into each other and blended differently in specific instances, neither ever really disappearing. However, Drum's fascination with the urban 'modern miss' as a symbol of modernity and progress for Africans reached a peak around 1958-1962. This included a brief moment when the 'modern miss' appeared as an explicit challenger to Apartheid whilst remaining differentiated from Drum's depiction of adult women's formal political activism. Thereafter Drum's positive interest in the 'modern miss' waned and domesticated adult women became the focus of its newly instituted Women's Pages. Whilst occasionally resurfacing it was the modern miss' counterpart, the young unmarried mother who received increasing amounts of attention and approbation into the 1970s. The remainder of the article explores in more detail the changing appearances of the 'modern miss' in Drum throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

'An Ornament and an Ordeal'- the fashionable Modern Miss.

Early on in Drum a 'male gaze' was established as the means through which women and especially young women were presented to the reader. Almost all articles and short stories, and importantly the editorial voice were all explicitly male. The exceptions to this were a handful of short stories and the voice of

Drum's agony aunt. However in the early 1950s these were written by Drum's all-male staff (Driver, 1996). Early in the 1950s Drum often had features on young female singers and beauty queens but they were very often married and despite their bodily visibility these figures were depicted as socially conservative. This is illustrated by a feature in the May 1954 Drum asked its readers to write in on the question, 'Should women have equal rights with men?' The votes came in with 101 answering 'no' and 58 'yes'. The prize winning letter suggested women be given 'courtesy but no rights' (Drum: July 1954: 13). Cherryl Walker later used this comment as a title to her chapter on the position of women in 1950s South Africa. Most interestingly however for the 'modern miss' is the fact that when this question was first put to the readers, one of those presented as arguing 'no' to equal rights was Miss Ruth Mofolo, 1953's 'Miss Africa'. A few pages earlier Drum had run a photo feature on Miss Mofolo; following her around in a 'day in the life of' a glamorous beauty queen. Miss Mofolo argued in the debate on equal rights that 'I would lose my feminine charm which is spared for [my husband] only and for lack of feminine admiration from me he would divert his interest to something else' (Drum: May 1954: 26). In the early 1950s the depiction of young women might have broken new ground in depicting 'modern' westernised dress but not in their societal position.

However, a few years later a discourse of urban African progress and societal change had become clearly linked with the figure of the 'modern miss' in a series of articles from the end of 1957 into 1958. This included a rhetorical recognition of 'equality' and 'rights'. There are several things to note about this discourse as it appeared in Drum, firstly there was a racial component to it. Progress and modernity first became associated with Indian, South African girls who were seen as having been oppressed by parents and 'tradition' more severely and recently than African girls. Secondly, this progress was highly gendered, since what was an act of rebellion, a political step towards modernity for girls was not so for boys. Drum concentrated upon young women's dress and sexual and marital behaviour, talked about these in a political language of 'rights' and freedom yet almost never represented young women as formal political actors. In these articles young women's economic empowerment and sexual availability were the signs of her modernity and this was signalled most clearly by what she wore and the visibility of her body.

In December 1957 Drum provoked controversy amongst its readers when it first published an article about 'Asian girls going out to work and going out with boyfriends without a member of the family in attendance' (Drum, December 1957: 55). In February 1958 this was followed up with a second article entitled 'Meet Durban's Modern Miss' (Drum, February 1958: 20-3). G.R. Naidoo the author of this second article boasted about reaction to the first, 'Telephone calls! Abuse! What names we've been called! But what cheers from the younger set, who doesn't believe that modern ways must mean perdition

and all hell!’ In this way, Drum sets itself up as an ally in a generational battle: ‘HORROR! Say the old folks. HORRAY! We say’ (*ibid*: 20). Drum described a ‘revolutionising’ of life for young Indian’s that included, dancing, swimming, wearing bathing costumes, eating ice cream, flirting, and earning their own income. In its discussion of the ‘modern Indian miss’ Drum used the Sari as signifier of tradition and expounded a moderate message of the need for balance between tradition and modernity: ‘Yes, the Modern Indian Miss is crusading like mad for her rights. And right up in front is newly wed Ruby Pillay, a gal whose wardrobe includes slacks, swirling skirts and what’s more, the Sari. Yes, the Sari too’ (*ibid*: 23). This marks out some important aspects of the discourse upon modernity and female youth. The first was Drum’s constant discussion of fashion as a symbol of wider social changes, the second that despite the suggestion of changing social roles for young women there was an onus upon them to negotiate these changing boundaries respectably.

These aspects are again apparent in an article that appeared the following month in March 1958 on the ‘Modern African Miss’. In this article Can Themba, the writer, was in possession of the discriminating male gaze as he ‘looked at the girls in high heeled shoes’ (Drum, March 1958: 24). Themba emphasised much more overtly the urban character of the ‘modern African miss’: ‘She’s city-slick and sophisticated’. But this was a special kind of urbanity. Her ‘progress’ in the last 50 years took her from ‘mud walls and dung smeared floors’ to the city and jobs and money. ‘At first she was gaudy and brash, and flourished her newly-won freedom and funds in the colourful manner of the prostitute and brazen flirt’. Themba stated, ‘grey old heads shook themselves sadly’ *and were right*. ‘But soon she learned grace and poise and finesse’ (*ibid*: 25). ‘Sophisticated’ was the crucial word in this urban characterization. There was a judgment to be made as to whether a girl’s character had been ‘revolutionised or ravaged’ by modernity. For Themba, the modern miss’ relationship with men, whilst challenging was viewed by men from a position of strength. He says, ‘we realise the modern miss is catching up with modern times and with us’ (*ibid*: 27). Themba conceives of men as already modern, whilst women were modernising. There was however a palpable and inevitable threat; ‘God save us when she by-passes us, like the American woman has out-strode her man’(*ibid*). The ‘modern miss’ thus appears as a symbolic measure of a nation’s progress. Themba’s ambivalence towards her lay in what he thought this might mean for South African men.

In 1962, an article on the ‘twist’ dance craze, displays even more clearly the gendering of youth central to these discussions of modernity. The article was titled ‘Twist on Girls...to freedom’. It described the new style of dancing as something new and modern from America. In South Africa the dance was ‘for men just another example of their sophistication. But for the girls it represents another break away from the old traditional ways’ (Drum, November 1962: 56). In this way young women were differentiated

from young men and the nature of their urbanity and modernity was always up for male scrutiny. Themba's final judgement of the 'modern African miss' as both 'ornament' of township life and 'ordeal' for young men sums up perfectly the way in which the objectified female body was at the centre of Drum's discussion of modernity and the perceived gender and generational tumult of the Apartheid city.

In June 1959, the trope of the 'modern miss' reached its apogee when Drum launched a column entitled 'Girl About Town' in which a young, unmarried, fashion model Marion Morel recounted tales from her everyday life 'about town' first hand. The column ran until 1963 and ended when Marion got married. The Girl About Town column was the first time Drum allowed an apparently unmediated young woman's voice onto its pages and followed on from earlier 'photo features' in which Drum cover girls were photographed going about their day. Significantly a large part of Marion's activities took place 'about town', in the street, in the shopping centre, at the cinema. The column had a 'chummy' tone, seemingly intending to address other young women. The 'Girl About Town' appears a sustained portrait of an ideal of urban young womanhood in late 1950s early 1960s South Africa. Interestingly, when Marion's column disappeared it was replaced in Drum by a Women's page. The Women's page became increasingly domestic in its focus; its opening feature was 'how can you triumph in the big battle of the pub and you?' (Drum, May 1963: 58). It seems that 'Girl About Town' was only a brief foray out into the urban city with a young woman as the reader's guide. A direct explanation for this apparent shift is difficult to provide but what it does demonstrate is the non-linear nature of Drum's discourses on modernity and the unstable position young women occupied in Drum's vision of the city.

In Drum young women were defined and discussed through the nature of their relationship to men and Marion Morel was no exception. 'Girl About Town' began with a clear statement about the boundaries of the 'female youth' that Drum was recreating in its pages- it was unmarried. 'Dating' appeared in Drum as a new arena of behaviour in which young women may have challenged parental authority but were clearly circumscribed by gender ideologies and by a powerful adult judgements. The 'Girl About Town' column was the first instance in which a young woman's viewpoint was presented unmediated by parental advice. Marion's first words were 'I've made up my mind I'll never marry'. She continued:

While I'm single I have my job which is exacting and exciting. I can use or save my money as I choose. I can go out when I choose. I can dress in the most up to date fashions without being told "Yirra! Take that thing off. I'm not spending my money on a bag or sack or whatever you call it" (Drum, June 1959: 19).

Marion listed a set of freedoms her modern young womanhood entitled her to and central to this ideal was her job and control over her own money. The idea of fashion as the means for young women to express this economic and social independence was a recurring theme of the column. It appeared here as having

its own language since whoever was scolding Marion did not understand how to name what it was that she had bought. The imaginary speaker instead resorted dismissively to ‘whatever you call it’. Marion’s bold initial statement of independence was weakened slightly by her going on to detail how she would behave ‘if I ever get married – which I won’t – But if I did’. Significantly ‘Girl About Town’ came to an end when, according to her column, Marion did indeed get married and her husband wanted her to stop work. The ‘Girl About Town’ thus echoed other depictions of young women in Drum. Marion was accessible to Drum’s readers only through the magazine and marriage ended the public availability of young women. Driver has also argued that at times Drums suggested ‘ownership’ of its cover girls saw the magazine apparently taking ‘the place of customary patriarchal structures’ (Driver, 1996: 235). It also resounds with Clive Glaser’s studies of male youth gangs on the Witwatersrand and the position of young women as analogous with gang territory (Glaser, 2000). This was most clearly illustrated by a 1956 article in which Priscilla, one of Drum’s popular cover girls got married. ‘Pin-Up gets Pinned!’ detailed her transformation into a housewife. Drum’s visiting journalists asked her new husband, “But tell me Marsh, does she nag you like the proverbial housewife?” He answered, “Proverbial! Why my girl is the ORIGINAL nagger. You should hear her Yak Yak Yak when I come home late or if I forget to bring her candy on pay day. Sometimes she gets out of hand” (Drum, April 1956: 40-41). The contrast between cover girl and housewife is stark. Drum laments that ‘doing her household chores she still *looks* like “Miss Fifty Sex”’. The article ends with photographer and writer being thrown out of the house by the husband; a literal depiction of the perceived boundaries of modern young womanhood policed by competing patriarchies.

The ‘Girl About Town’ placed many of the familiar moral constraints upon her readers’ supposedly similar social lives. In 1953 in Drum’s advice column, Dolly the Agony Aunt put out a request: ‘we have so many questions on the problem “should I tell him?” I would welcome letters from men who could tell me what they feel about a girl who tells them she loves him’ (Drum, January 1953: 45). The only printed reply appeared in April under the banner headline ‘What men think! Should she tell him?’

My answer is no. Surely it is not unnatural for a girl to feel nuts about a guy, but he hates to hear her telling him. He just feels unsafe and starts to wonder if she’s trying to hook him! If she’s attentive and affectionate, and appears to love him without telling him straight out, she has a better chance of winning him. But remember a man must think he’s lucky to have you! (Drum, April 1953: 33)

In 1961 Marion gave her readers advice on the same subject, with a subtly different tone, the ‘Girl About Town’ emphasised young women’s agency within the narrow confines laid out above:

Just how much chasing should a girl do? "None" you say? "Phooey", I say. Of course a girl has to do some chasing- only thing is she mustn't make it obvious. As we chicks know, men are suckers, they seldom latch on to the fact that they are being stalked, until it is too late (Drum, July 1961: 17).

The attempt to create a new 'chummy' relationship between Marion and her female readers comes across well in this passage. However, the similarities between the 1953 letter and Marion's opinions also show that the onus continued to be upon young women's behaviour in relationships. Again this often centred upon young women's ability to 'wear' their modernity appropriately. For example, Marion gave advice on 'how to get out of your boyfriend's car in a tight skirt'. Such advice was necessary since, 'even if you have nice legs when you show too much of them people will think you're a tart' (Drum, February 1961: 17). All of this meant the 'modern miss' could never quite avoid the spectre of unmarried motherhood as a slight on *her* behaviour and respectability.

'The girl must find a man'- dating, marriage and motherhood.

The social arena of dating was the set of relationships within which the 'modern miss' managed her availability and while regarded in Drum as the modern way of doing things, this too was dangerous terrain. The figure of the young unmarried mother hovered always in the background as the counterpoint to the 'Girl About Town'. The 'modern miss' in Drum was entitled to a 'youth' or period of 'dating' that was seen as modern and in many ways challenging to adult authority. However, within this arena of 'dating' young women were clearly always subordinate to young men. In instances where Drum discussed youth transgression of the 'respectable' dating norms it espoused, young unmarried mothers were regarded as the 'sad fact of life' that must be begrudgingly acknowledged. These ideas co-existed alongside what has been described as a 'bland reproduction of European and American constructions of gender as part of an overall ideology of romantic love' (Driver, 1996: 233).

The notion of a youth of dating before marriage appeared as a respectable possibility in Drum. It was largely in Drum's advice column that this notion of a socialising youth of dating was discussed and its norms and boundaries debated. In 1956 'Dear Dolly' clearly permits a girl a youth of 'dating':

Few girls think seriously of marriage at the age of 19. They may dream about it and talk about it but they don't want to settle down just then. It is natural for most girls to make male acquaintances at that age. This helps them to make their final choice later. I think you should give her time to gain experience in life (Drum, March 1956: 43).

'Dating' was the 'modern' means through which young women's availability was both permitted and limited. Drum often denigrated 'traditional' practises such as lobola (bride wealth payments) and would often discuss the boundaries of parental involvement. However, the most ambiguous aspect of debate was the position occupied by young, unmarried mothers. Unmarried motherhood was discussed frequently in

Drum; pregnant young women's letters appeared regularly on the advice page throughout the period. According to Dolly's advice they were allowed to continue dating, in order to find a husband for their family, but were expected to have 'learnt their lesson' when it came to men. This did however exist alongside admonishment of young men for failing to accept the (mainly financial) responsibilities of fatherhood.

In the early 1960s unmarried mothers were also the subject of several anxious debates on what was to be done about them. In a 1960 article it was estimated that of 15,846 African births registered in 1958 in Johannesburg, 6,146 were born to unmarried mothers. Interestingly the article appears to see having an illegitimate child as the 'female' counterpart to the 'anti-social' behaviour of male youth gangs. Apparently, 'most boys and girls meeting in the streets end up fathering and mothering babies'. The causes are listed 'poverty, wages, legislation, bad girls, bad boys, job reservations, lobola' (Drum, April 1960: 51). The imagery here was important, 'families' made on 'the streets' were in contrast to the 'proper' site of the family - a home. The streets were seen as outside of adult control; 'too many boys roaming the streets with most parents out at work' (*ibid*: 49). However, Drum's relationship with this urban youth culture was more complex than adult disapproval. After all the 'Girl About Town' occupied those same streets as did a number of Drum's young male writers. Can Themba for example, described as the 'u-Clever' of Sophiatown, the 'supreme intellectual tsotsi' who blurred such lines of respectability (Chapman, 2001: 209).

Articles such as those on unmarried mothers highlight the way in which youth were often the locus for fears about modernity and the potential for societal breakdown that it also seemed to offer. This breakdown was often seen as the absence of adult control. So, in May 1957 Drum highlighted the apparent youth takeover of Orlando Community Centre. The story was introduced as one of 'a cruel, ghastly tale of juvenile delinquency and hooliganism' in which 'adults have deserted the Centre' (Drum, May 1957: 35). This was a symbolic description of degradation that Drum saw as having struck urban society. The community centre had been turned into a meeting place only for young people drinking, smoking, gambling and engaging in illicit sex. In June of 1957 Drum published 'Love by Martial Law!' an indictment of violent male control over young women. 'In Johannesburg these days, Calf love has become rough love. For the bright boys have thrown overboard all the art and finesse in love-making and resorted to force. Love by force or love by 'martial law' as the boys so colourfully put it has become the latest past time in Johannesburg' (Drum, June 1957: 21). Blame was directed at Apartheid, however Drum does also argue that 'the main trouble is that too many of our womenfolk accept martial law as love'; labelled as 'pain loving hussies' women were admonished for harbouring a 'primitive hero-worship of the rough and rugged brute' (*ibid*). Again this became an issue of women's mismanagement of their

availability. In locating problems of 'breakdown' predominately amongst 'youth' Drum distanced itself from that breakdown whilst it also celebrated the modernity of elements of young urban living. The voices that discussed such problems were invariably adult; another special report in March of 1965 was entitled 'what the experts say about teenagers and sex' (Drum: March 1965: 22). Interestingly, Marion never directly discussed unmarried motherhood in the 'Girl About Town'. When that column disappeared it was overwhelmingly these ostensibly adult, anxiety ridden views of the 'modern miss' that predominated in Drum alongside the numerous photographs of young women's bodies.

'These politicians lack glamour'- female youth and politics.

The links between the discourses of modernity that Drum espoused, an informal or 'cultural' resistance to Apartheid that this has been said to offer and formal liberation politics are not clear cut or even necessarily traceable. However, the parameters of the urban modern community that Drum debated should be read as significant in the light of nationalist political opposition movements that also drew upon discourses of modernity and attendant progress and breakdown. Drum did engage with women's anti-apartheid politics as it rose to prominence in the mid- 1950s but interestingly as the 1950s went on it came to clearly differentiate adult women activists from the 'modern miss'. This was even the case when Drum momentarily suggested the 'modern miss' as a direct challenger to Apartheid.

In Drum young women's politicisation or political activity if it was mentioned at all was usually associated with their sexual availability, expressed through both discussions of clothing and dating. This can be illustrated succinctly by two cartoons appearing ten years apart on Drum's jokes page. In 1960 a cartoon depicted what might be described as a 'busty', glamorous young woman talking to a policeman with a crowd of men in the background. The caption read, 'I wasn't organising a demonstration Mr Policeman- the boys just gathered around to have a look at my new sweater' (Drum, May 1960: 79). This plays upon the humour of over zealous Apartheid policemen but also his mistake in thinking that such a woman might be acting politically. Ten years later, Drum is even more explicit in its references to anti-apartheid politics. In 1970 Drum ran a cartoon series entitled 'Cartoonstan' which featured some long running characters and played upon the changing language of Apartheid. The series title refers to the newly instituted Bantustans or separate homelands and was subtitled 'proclaimed area for laughs!' In the April edition of Drum in a picture composition very similar to the 1960 cartoon, a young woman known as Meraai was surrounded by a crowd of young men with the caption, 'Meraai's separate development certainly doesn't cause a man power shortage' (Drum, April 1970: 4). Another example showed Meraai, apparently having just left her boyfriend, Gammat. This was signalled by her provocative dress- short, tight-fitting clothes. A group of male bystanders commented, 'That's Meraai's liberation movement-

She's just got rid of Gammat!')(Drum, November 1970: 59). The 'modern miss' in Drum was so far from being considered a formal political actor that her sexual availability and her activities of dating and shopping were often 'politicised' for comic effect.

Similar attitudes can be found in full length articles and features and run alongside the more obvious 'feminisation' of powerful women that Dorothy Driver has commented upon. This becomes clear if we examine a pair of articles appearing in the October 1961 issue. Two articles, one entitled 'The girls want a pantie party vote' and the other 'The Women Speak up' highlight Drum's differential presentation of young and old women and the way in which different articles could undermine and contradict each other. 'The Women speak up' reports the 'first big scale political meeting and first sign of open political activity' since the 1960 post-Sharpeville crackdown, that saw the ANC and the PAC banned and leaders arrested. In a straightforward and serious portrayal of the third national conference of the Federation of South African Women, Lilian Ngoyi, president of FSAW was described powerfully in the article as 'slamming into racialism' in her leading speech. It was emphasised that it was women who were leading a break in the silencing of political activity after Sharpeville (Drum, October 1961: 47). The contrast with 'The girls want a pantie party vote' couldn't be more complete. In this article the idea of young women in charge of South Africa was suggested for comic effect. The sub-heading joked, 'it might be chaos but it'd be fun!' (Drum, October 1961: 36). The article began with the prospect of another election in South Africa; 'So what? We can't take part in it anyway'. Drum decided to ask 'the Girls' what they would do if they were in charge. What followed was a mixture of inane jokes, sexual innuendo and the discrediting of some potentially more serious suggestions. It was young women's sexual availability that all the discussion centred upon. For example, Ruby Abrahams: 'say, how about a couple of girls in the cabinet? A pair with the right set of statistics could show the present crowd a thing or two'. Or Soda Osman: 'I'd put on my bikini and then you'd see some action! These politicians lack glamour.' But 'the girls' also touch upon more serious issues affecting young women- the vulnerability of marriage in particular as an institution for their security. So, Barbara Chapile 'demanded a new deal for women, providing for fun and romance for young girls and a tax on men to ensure alimony and maintenance for all women'. She states rather dramatically, 'the national crisis is the high cost of loving and fear of the consequences'. Her next suggestion was 'a beauty contest to choose the women to go into parliament' (*ibid*: 36-7). It is hard not to see this article undermining a politics potentially led by women that was placing issues affecting women at the fore such as Federation of South African Women.

However, the trope of the 'modern miss' did have other political possibilities. Young women's appearance and clothing could also be politicised explicitly by Drum as a sign of that African modernity denied by Apartheid ideologies. In these instances, no matter what style of clothing the more revealing the

outfit (signalling the availability of the body) the more Drum championed the wearer. In 1960 Drum proclaimed Doreen Madambo, 23, as 'Girl of the Year' after she was fined £5 for being indecently dressed wearing Zulu beads in Johannesburg (Drum, January 1960: 36). 'Man of the Year' was Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika. 'Woman of the Year' was Mrs Elizabeth Mafekeng, who had risen to prominence first through the Food and Canning Worker's Union and then the Federation of South African Women's anti-pass campaigns (Walker, 1991: 119). Doreen's defiance was rated as a significant contribution to African nationalism, but she was still presented within the trope of the 'modern miss'. Around the same time 'Girl About Town' also depicted the same social and sexual availability of the 'modern miss' as bringing her into direct conflict with Apartheid. In 1959 'Girl About Town' repeatedly espoused the message that Apartheid restrictions got in the way of a modern urban girl's lifestyle. This politicisation of the 'modern miss' built upon aspects of the trope that had been apparent in previous incarnations. Notably they centred upon Marion's economic independence and consumption practises and her ability to otherwise move freely whenever and wherever she wanted. The first time the issue was raised was when Marion went shopping in an exclusive department store and got a hostile reception at the make-up counter. She fumed, 'I must admit I was ready to go to the manager if she had refused [to serve me]. After all, there is no such thing as white and non-white money. And if these people are going to take my money I think they should do so with a smile' (Drum, July 1959: 17). In subsequent columns in 1959 Marion attacked apartheid restrictions on buses 'its amazing how standing staring at an empty seat after a day's work can drive you nuts'; at concerts 'now I regard myself as reserved so I asked for a ticket'; in cafes; and in parks 'the day had been spoilt- by apartheid' (Drum, October 1959: 19; November 1959: 17; December 1959: 17). Marion expressed anti-apartheid sentiments and even contravened apartheid restrictions but she never mentioned formal organised politics or the recently pressing political issue of women's passes. This briefly politicised version of the 'modern miss' was sharply differentiated from the activism of women's liberation politics.

While Drum did not simply reflect widespread attitudes, it is interesting to highlight the ways in which gender and generation also intersected within the discussions of women's political movements of the period. Cherryl Walker noted in her work upon the 1950s Federation of South African Women that its first conference was 'not overall, a meeting of young women', as most delegates were married and with children. In 1954 FSAW drew up a pamphlet entitled 'What Women Want', which was submitted to the conveners of the Congress of the People for incorporation within the proposed Freedom Charter. One of the most controversial aspects of the document was the second demand calling for birth control clinics. Discussion amongst FSAW members produced one argument in approval citing young unmarried mothers- 'We should instruct children in this. All the children we have today are children from school

children and...from our daughters' (Walker, 1991: 183). These concerns echo those of early twentieth century mission Christianity that Deborah Gaitskell has suggested expected adult mothers to take responsibility for their daughters' courtship and marriage practices. Gaitskell argues that despite these expectations by the 1940s mothers found themselves 'compelled to channel their major energies into economic survival' rather than policing adolescent behaviour (Gaitskell, 1982: 352). The same debates and anxieties are also recorded in Drum's pages into the 1950s and 1960s. Whilst the 'modern miss' might symbolise or embody progress and modernity in an abstract sense and recognise young women's new visibility in the Apartheid city, this did not extend to unlimited space for her acceptance in new roles and relationships. Notably young women were not accorded a potential position as serious political actors. Indeed, even when Drum appeared to accord anti-apartheid women's politics with respect, its sexualised depiction of young women always implicitly undermined that. We can cautiously recognise that similar generational positions may have entered into the intra-gender relationships of liberation politics.

Conclusions

If we are to fully understand the nature of Drum's cultural resistance to Apartheid the figure of the young woman is vital. Drum's engagement with an urban African modernity was far from an unambiguous celebration. Modernity was a precarious set of social practises. The new availability of young women's bodies was both modern and progressive *and* morally threatening. These discourses of modernity demonstrate the way in which Drum was a forum for the contestation of urban social practises. That which was corrupt and lamentable in township life could be traced to 'outdated' traditions and Apartheid and simultaneously to an upset of 'appropriate' gender and generational relations. The sexual objectification of young women's bodies and their economic empowerment was central to both strands of discourse on modernity- they either become symbolic pioneers of modernity or sexual victims of moral 'breakdown'. The links between Drum's discourses of modernity embedded in their own particular context as opposition to Apartheid and global discourse of consumerism and a new universal youth culture were numerous and complex. The female youth that Drum recreated in its pages was recognisably the type of 'modern girl' that Lynn Thomas and others have traced the emergence of (Thomas, 2006). The focus in the late 1950s and the 1960s on young women's economic empowerment and sexual availability can be read as a site for the local negotiation of ideas of a modern commercialised youth of fashion, shopping, and dating. By examining Drum's debates on modernity through the trope of the 'modern miss', we can probe further the way in which that modernity was structured by generation alongside race, class and gender. Understanding the social configurations of Drum's 'cultural resistance' to Apartheid

illuminates the gendered and generational responses of formal political opposition movements that conducted concurrent debates over South African urban modernity.

Whilst young women are highly visible in *Drum* they rarely appear in political histories of South Africa. The recent interest in African youth cultures from social scientists and historians has inherited a long-standing focus on urban males from the study of youth cultures in Europe. This interest in young black, urban men has only recently had a gendered dimension to it and still very little attention is paid to young women and their roles in 'youth cultures' (Abbink, 2005: 6). Overall a gender-blindness can be found to pervade much of the literature concerned with 'youth' in South Africa, and especially that concerned with the prominent political youth cultures of 'students' from 1976 and the 'comrades' or 'young lions' of the 1980s. Symptomatic of studies that focus upon young, black, urban males and their politicisation is an argument that young women were marginalised from youth politics due to its violent nature and 'macho' culture (Seekings, 1993: 21). By choosing to ignore the nature of any participation and/or exclusion of young women such studies fail to provide adequate understandings of the gendering of 'youth' and 'youth political cultures' in South Africa. The focus here upon the depiction and discussion of young women in *Drum's* African urbanity demonstrates that young women were central to a commercialised African cultural resistance to Apartheid of the 1950s and 1960s.

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